

Using Temp-to-Hire to Reduce Pharmacy Technician Turnover

By Marc F. Cochran, CSP

Making any major decision right now is proving to be very difficult. The media continues to reflect that there is a very low level of trust in the economy, and especially with consumers. Hiring new employees is equally as difficult, because of the time you invest interviewing, forming a competitive offer, and closing a candidate – but still leaving long term results much to chance.

The NC Association of Hospitals released a report recently stating that the statewide turnover rate for Pharmacy Techs was 22.7%, up from 14.2% in 2004. **This turnover can be reduced by having more information made possible by experiencing first hand a candidate's work ethic and performance.**

There is a way to gain this valuable information, and staffing firms have utilized it in numerous other industries for years. It's called Temp-to-Hire, and very simply boils down to "try before you buy".

For years, the customer service, office/clerical, and accounting sectors have utilized this method to bring in new employees. It gives them a trial period, often 90 days to 6 months, to evaluate a person's performance on the job before officially offering the candidate a job. It was quickly realized that most of the turnover happened in the positions paying \$8.00 to \$15.00 per hour. The reason behind that is there tends to be less emphasis placed on the screening and interviewing of these positions, increasing the chance for turnover to occur before the new employee even starts.

Originally, in a traditional interview and hire scenario, you see what the candidate wants you to see and hear – not what helps you make a hiring decision. Often, you can only verify employment at the places they allow you to call, but you never really are able to get a true reference. In a sense, you are making a major hiring decision based on "controlled" information, which may very well be incomplete or false.

How Temp-to-Hire works: The staffing firm meets with the hiring managers and creates a profile of what to recruit. Then, the staffing firm completes all the screening, due diligence, and schedules an interview with the hiring manager for initial approval to start the temp assignment. Already there is an additional "check" by the staffing firm before a hiring manager ever hears about a potential candidate. And for the staffing firm to get repeat opportunities it must send high quality candidates, or it risks not getting asked back.

Now, the critical advantage of the Temp-to-Hire process begins, allowing the facility to truly evaluate the skills and potential of the candidate. They get to evaluate the candidate as they perform the duties of the job, interact

with staff and management, and how well they respond to stress in the workplace. And in the event that the candidate does not work out at any point during the temp period, the separation responsibility falls to the staffing firm – not you.

"We needed employees who could catch on to our processes with very little training and maintain our workflow. The technicians came in and became a part of our team. The process was seamless. The greatest value to this process was our ultimate goal was to keep these employees on our staff. We were able to see their work ethic and dependability before we actually hired them. This was a great benefit, because there are times when a person has a great interview, but suboptimal job performance. Our agreement allowed us to weed these employees out, before we, as a company, invested too much money in the recruitment/on-boarding process," says **Freddie Dennis, RPh, Central Pharmacy Technician Manager at Forsyth Medical Center.**

So what are the risks? First of all, there is always a degree of risk when you hire someone – this process is used to reduce that risk. So, you still have to make a decision, but you now have 90 days to 6 months of results and feedback to base it on. Also, there will be instances where you determine that the candidate is not working out. During those times, it is beneficial that the staffing firm shoulders that unemployment burden and not you.

It's important not to forget, that determining the cause of turnover may be a difficult realization and many times the expertise and past experience of the staffing firm can aid in determining the root cause and possible solutions to the problem.

From a cost standpoint, Temp-to-Hire is really no different than the total cost of an employee, including what you already pay for taxes, administration, workers compensation, insurance and other costs. The staffing firm carries the administration of that employee and the entire burden for unemployment, insurance, and benefits during the temp period allowing the facility to focus on training and truly evaluating the candidate.

Today, with studies showing the cost of turnover at nearly 6 to 10 times the annual salary, reducing turnover by just 10% can have a huge savings on the department's or facilities budget, not to mention with employee morale from the newfound consistency.

For more information about how a Pharmacy Technician Temp-to-Hire program can help your organization, please contact Hire Dynamics Rx at 1-866-489-8168 or mcochran@hiredynamicsrx.com.